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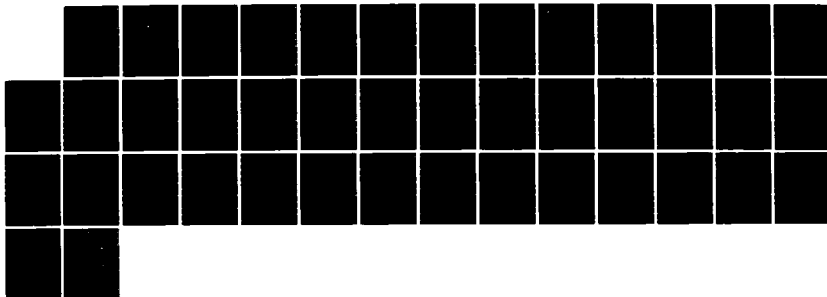
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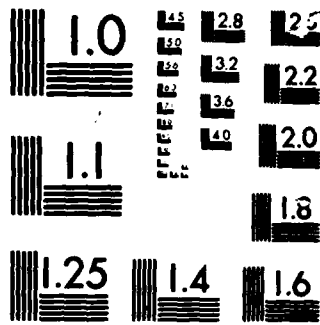
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STUDENT REPORT

PUERTO RICAN STATEHOOD AND THE
CARIBBEAN BASIN STABILITY

MAJ BENIGNO SIERRA-IRIZARRY 86-2295

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REPORT NUMBER 86-2295

TITLE PUERTO RICAN STATEHOOD AND THE CARIBBEAN
BASIN STABILITY

AUTHOR(S) MAJOR BENIGNO SIERRA-IRIZARRY

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SPONSOR LT COL PAUL A. TRIBBLE, ACSC/EDCN

Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
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PREFACE

Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States that, at present, enjoys a unique political relationship with the mainland. In many ways, it is very similar to Texas, New York, or any other state of the Union, and in many ways is very different. At present the island is going through a period of serious economic problems. Experts in Caribbean affairs, politicians, and informed citizens agree, in part, the cause of these problems is the present political relationship between the United States and the island. For years, the possibility of statehood for the island has been discussed from the lowest to the highest political levels, both in Puerto Rico and Washington. However, statehood has never materialized. There is a significant segment of Puerto Ricans that firmly believe statehood is the solution to Puerto Rico's political and economic woes. Therefore, statehood will be the focus of this project.

The aim of this project is to provide the average American with the necessary elements of knowledge and judgement to understand Puerto Rico and its current problems. Hopefully, the ideas presented in this paper will provide a baseline study for later development by other ACSC students interested in the matter.

The author wants to express his gratitude to all those persons who in one way or another contributed to the happy completion of this project. To Major Mark Warner, sincere thanks for your interest, probing questions, and advice. To Lt Col Paul A. Tribble, thank you for your encouragement and for sponsoring the project. Special recognition to Dr. Bynum Weathers for his words of inspiration and in his supervision insuring the content accuracy of this paper. Last but not least, the author wants to say "thank you," in a very special way, to his wife Maria, for her support, patience, many hours gathering supportive data and, above all, for her unfaltering stimulus. To all of the above, "Gracias Amigos," your patience, grace, and endurance have been rewarded.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Benigno Sierra-Irizarry is a native-born Puerto Rican. He holds a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education with a concentration in history from The Catholic University of Puerto Rico. In 1974 he obtained a master's degree in Sciences with a specialty in audiology. He joined the United States Air Force in 1975. His first tour of duty was at USAF Medical Center Wright-Patterson, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. In 1980 he was assigned as staff audiologist to USAFE Regional Medical Center Wiesbaden, West Germany. Upon returning from his overseas tour, he was assigned to USAF Medical Center Wilford Hall, Lackland AFB, Texas. In the summer of 1986, he was selected to attend Air Command and Staff College in residence at Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	iii
About the Author	iv
Table of Contents	v
Executive Summary	vi
 CHAPTER ONE--INTRODUCTION	
The Problem	1
Purpose and Objectives	1
Scope and Limitations	2
Author's Motivation	2
 CHAPTER TWO--PUERTO RICO UNDER SPAIN	5
 CHAPTER THREE--PUERTO RICO U.S.A.	9
 CHAPTER FOUR--THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO	13
 CHAPTER FIVE--STATEHOOD THE PROCESS OF SELF DETERMINATION	
Economic Considerations	19
Political Considerations	21
Cultural Impact of Statehood	22
 CHAPTER SIX--STATEHOOD IN PERSPECTIVE	23
 CHAPTER SEVEN--CONCLUSIONS	27
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	33

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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REPORT NUMBER 86-2295

AUTHOR(S) MAJOR BENIGNO SIERRA-IRIZARRY

TITLE PUERTO RICAN STATEHOOD AND THE CARIBBEAN BASIN STABILITY

I. Purpose: To increase the reader's awareness of the economic and political problems of Puerto Rico and the viability of statehood as a solution to these problems.

II. Problem: Statehood for Puerto Rico has been debated since this Caribbean island became a territory of the United States in 1898. Statehood as a political solution is viable and acceptable to both the Puerto Ricans and the Caribbean Basin countries. However, these acceptance is conditional. Once this conditions are met by the United States and Puerto Rico, statehood will not be objectionable to either the American people or the Caribbean Basin community.

III. Data: Sources such as textbooks, journals, periodicals, and interviews, reveal that Puerto Rico is presently going through a period of serious economic difficulties. These sources tend to indicate the cause of the problem is the present political relationship between the United States and the island. Since Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States as part of the Treaty of Paris of 1898, the island has enjoyed a unique relationship with the mainland. However, this relationship has brought a series of unique problems and uncertainties to both Puerto Rico and the United States.

CONTINUED

For the Puerto Ricans it has brought a total economic dependency on the mainland and a lack of political identity. For the US, the political status of the island has become internationalized and often charged with perpetuating a colonial status against the Puerto Ricans' will. Statehood is a viable political alternative to solve this island's economic and political problems. Additionally, it will also increase the political stature of the United States in three ways. First, it will send a message to the Caribbean Basin countries that the United States doesn't look down on Spanish-speaking countries. Second, in granting statehood, Puerto Rico would no longer be a political liability. Finally, as a state of the Union, Puerto Rico could be instrumental in deterring the Cuban-Soviet expansion in that region of the world.

IV. Conclusions: Puerto Rican statehood could become a political asset for the United States where the payoff would overcome the initial investment. Statehood would not be opposed by the Caribbean Basin countries or the Puerto Ricans as long as the United States makes it very clear that once statehood is requested it will be granted.

V. Recommendations: The Government of the United States needs to establish an office to strictly deal with Puerto Rican affairs. Before statehood can be considered, however, the following conditions must be met: (1) Puerto Rico has to become economically self-sufficient; (2) any attempt to change the political status of the island must include all the political parties of the island and pertinent agencies of the Federal Government; (3) institute an intensive program to educate the Puerto Ricans on the cultural, economic, and political aspects of statehood; (4) hold a plebiscite to decide the political status as an end result and not the starting point of any specific policy. In conclusion, the United States can no longer afford to neglect the political and economic problems of Puerto Rico.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The purpose of this study is to increase the reader's awareness and understanding of the current political and economic problems in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is neither a state nor a territory whose admission as a state is foreordained (3:1). Although the island enjoys self-government, these autonomic powers remain contingent upon the decisions of the United States Congress and the Constitution. This unusual relationship has created significant problems for the Puerto Ricans and the federal government. For the Puerto Ricans, the present political relationship with the United States has generated a number of economic and political problems (20:12). For the United States, the political status of the island has become internationalized and often the United States has been charged with perpetuating a repressive colonial status in the island (6:236; 13:119). These charges have been emphatically denied by the United States representatives since 1953 when the island was removed from the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories (3:3). In fact, Puerto Rico's present political status denies the basic principles of self determination and equality. "In the last two decades the island has become an embarrassing colony" (15:291). Demands for change will become more insistent and if not met, a crisis may develop affecting the United States as well as the political balance of the Caribbean Basin (15:293).

Purpose and Objectives

This study postulates that Puerto Rican statehood is a viable solution to the economic and political problems of the people of Puerto Rico. However, this solution is not devoid of problems. The study will analyze the potential problems such a change could precipitate and make recommendations to minimize their impact.

The author intends to accomplish his purpose by the analysis and evaluation of three objectives. First, the author will evaluate the cultural, political, and economic impact of statehood on the Puerto Ricans. Second, the author will assess the effects of Puerto Rican statehood on the political balance of the Caribbean Basin countries. The third objective will be

accomplished by an analysis of how statehood could serve as a deterrent to Cuban-Soviet expansionism in the Caribbean Basin.

Scope and Limitations

The analysis will be initiated by looking at Puerto Rico's historical background and the factors contributing to the concept of "Puerto Ricanism" (1:63). It is what makes the inhabitants of this island different from the mainland citizen. In short, "Puerto Ricanism" is the soul of the islander; the result of the selective intermixing of the Spanish, African, and Indian cultures; its beliefs, values, and habits (1:64).

Understanding the Puerto Rican through his history is crucial in understanding the uniqueness of the present Puerto Rican political and economic problems. Chapters II, III, and IV will give the reader a historical overview covering the Spanish conquest to the present; from 1508 to 1985. The historical background will accomplish two objectives. First, it will give the reader a brief view of Puerto Rican history. Second, it will provide a better understanding of Puerto Rico, its people, and their culture. Chapter IV will address the present political status of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth (Estado Libre Asociado). The Estado Libre Asociado status is the basis of our present political relationship with the United States; therefore, it merits separate discussion. The political parties, the contribution of Luis Muñoz-Marín, and Operation Bootstrap will be briefly presented and analyzed.

The next two chapters will present and discuss the political and economical implications of statehood for the Puerto Ricans and for the Caribbean Basin countries. Whenever the term "Caribbean Basin countries" is used, it will refer to the Central American countries and the islands in the Caribbean. The economic impact of statehood will be assessed in terms of the long range future of the present economic status. Also, a transition scheme from the present economic situation to a post-statehood economic structure will be discussed. The political impact will be analyzed in terms of the Puerto Rican and Caribbean Basin countries' perspective. The author will explain the concept of statehood Puerto Rican style (Estadidad Jibara), the conditions to achieve statehood, and the impact in the United States Congress. Chapter VI will conclude with an analysis on how Puerto Rican statehood could serve as a deterrent to the Cuban-Soviet expansionism in Central America and the Caribbean.

The final chapter, will present a series of conclusions, alternatives, and recommendations based on the background information and sources collected by the author. In this chapter the author will introduce his views, opinions and personal analysis regarding the project. For this purpose the author conducted a series of interviews with the Latin American officers attending the ACSC Class of 1986. These interviews will give the project credibility and, at the same time, provide a

fresh view from the standpoint of the Caribbean Basin countries. Another series of interviews were conducted in Puerto Rico to obtain the views of a representative sample of Puerto Rican citizens. The purpose is to give the reader a flavor of how the Puerto Ricans feel about the present political situation and statehood as a solution. The chapter and the research will end with a series of conclusions, alternatives, and points to ponder for the future.

Author's Motivation

The author's motivation in preparing this project is to share the many positive traits and qualities of his homeland and his people. The American people have a great capacity to learn as long as all the different aspects are presented and clarified. The Puerto Ricans can make a significant contribution to the quality of the American way of life should they be allowed to join the Union. Many studies have been published regarding the three political solutions to the political status of Puerto Rico. These are statehood, independence, and free associated state. This project will not discuss the best political solution to Puerto Rico's problems. That subject has been discussed "ad nauseam." The author's contention, by advocating a position, is that he will define the strong points and weaknesses of the solution. The author has selected statehood because it is the most controversial of the three political alternatives.

Since 1898 when the island became a possession of the United States, Presidents as well as the United States Congress have avoided the issue of the political status of Puerto Rico (20:12). The persistent explanation has been that the Puerto Rican wishes must be respected. These statements do not eliminate the responsibility of the National Government. The Puerto Ricans can determine the political solution to their status problem, but the United States Congress has the responsibility to act. Every Puerto Rican understands the difference between rights and real power. The fact is that the power to take action is in the hands of the United States Congress.

The people of Puerto Rico are ready for a change and this change has to be ordered and organized. Furthermore, the people of Puerto Rico must be informed and educated about the impending change, otherwise it could be rejected. This process of change may take years, but inevitably has to come. Puerto Rico has the potential to become one of the major assets of the Union. The United States needs to take action before a crisis develops (20:15). In the case of Puerto Rico there is still time.

Chapter Two

PUERTO RICO UNDER SPAIN

The Spanish rule in Puerto Rico laid the framework for the development of the Puerto Rican identity. This identity process began with the discovery of the island in 1493 and ended with the Autonomic Charter granted by Spain in 1898. After 405 years of Spanish influence in the political, cultural, social, and economic aspects of the Puerto Ricans, the end of the 19th century would bring changes never imagined by the islanders. New vital forces would shape the lifestyle of the Puerto Ricans in the 20th century.

Discovered during the second voyage of Columbus, Puerto Rico's colonization did not begin until 1508. To stimulate the Conquistadores to establish permanent settlements, the Spanish crown established the "encomiendas." The "encomiendas" were land grants which included a predetermined number of Indians for labor purposes. Before long, the system proved to be a failure. Historians agree, in the case of Puerto Rico, this failure was due to three reasons. First, the Indian population was not used to the burdensome tasks imposed by the Spanish such as mining and farming; many died or escaped. Second, the Spanish brought diseases to which the aborigines had no natural defenses, drastically reducing the Indian population. Thirdly, the excesses to which the Indians were submitted by the Spanish provoked rebellions which were suppressed. In the process many Indians were killed, further decimating the population. Eventually, black slaves were introduced in the island to replace the Indian population, beginning the third ethnic influence in the development of the "criollo" (10:28).

It was during the 16th century that Spain became the leading European power when Charles V inherited the Spanish crown and the Holy Roman Empire. (24:--). During this century, military fortifications were essential throughout the Spanish possessions. Puerto Rico was no exception and two important fortifications were built. These were La Fortaleza and El Morro Castle. They were responsible for the defense of San Juan Bay from attacks by corsairs, pirates, and the enemies of Spain. With the rise of England as a maritime power and the increase of British attacks on the Spanish colonies, Puerto Rican defenses were improved. The Spanish governors carried the title of "Capitan General" and, in effect, were the leading military and civil officers in Puerto Rico. To fund all the military improvements the "situado" was established. The "situado" was a sum of money sent annually by

the treasury of New Spain (now Mexico), to pay for the defense and government expenses on the island (7:14).

The end of the 16th century was marked by the English attacks on the Spanish possessions in the West Indies. In the case of Puerto Rico, there were two specific attacks. The first, by Sir Francis Drake in 1595 was unsuccessful (7:15). The second, in 1598 by George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, was successful in defeating the Spanish (24:--). For a period of two months, Puerto Rico was under English jurisdiction. The hostility of the islanders and epidemics forced the British to leave the island. These two attacks illustrate the high priority given to the island by the enemies of Spain, mainly, for strategic reasons.

The end of the 17th century saw Puerto Rico developed into a well established Spanish colony. A community lifestyle had developed and a legal and political system was in place. Economically, the island was in the process of developing an agriculturally based system. Militarily, it had become a Spanish bastion in the Caribbean.

The political life was controlled by the Spanish crown which appointed the governors to the island. All of them were native Spanish military officers. The system of the military governorships gave the island a highly centralized and strong-handed government. The political influence of the governor extended all over the island. The island was divided into territorial sectors known as "partidos," and in each sector there was a representative of the governor known as "Teniente a Guerra." Within each territorial sector there were the municipalities or "cabildos." In the "cabildos," however, the officer in charge was the "alcalde" or mayor. To this day some of these structures are preserved such as the "municipio" (City Hall) concept and the "alcalde" (24:--).

The community lifestyle that developed during this century was directly or indirectly related to the Catholic Church. The Church went beyond its spiritual mission and played a significant role in the social and cultural development of the island (7:31). It was actively involved in protecting the welfare of the Indians, slaves, and colonists. The Church also assumed the educational leadership by founding libraries, grammar schools, and schools of higher education.

The economy had evolved into an agricultural type by the end of the century. Gold mining stopped by 1540, after the reserves ran out, and forced a transition to an agricultural economy. The government established a program of land grants which paved the way for the opening of additional settlements in the interior of the island. These farms were worked by the colonists, their families, mulattoes, and slaves. Subsistence farming developed with cultivation of such products as vegetables, tobacco, bananas, and tropical fruits. Sugar cane was introduced and became the dominant crop. Other variations developed with cattle raising as well as tobacco becoming profitable. Particular attention was given to raising horses and

oxen since they were in high demand, locally and abroad. Besides farming no other economic infrastructure had developed (24:--).

The 18th century saw a series of significant events in the island's history. This was an era of new ideas, institutions, and political events. Political events such as the French Revolution and the American war of independence would spread the seed of instability in the Spanish colonies (7:41). Puerto Rico's location in the Caribbean was important in the increasing colonial trade. The island increased and strengthened its economic ties with the former British colonies. Puerto Rican products found their way into the markets of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston in exchange for manufactured goods (7:42). This practice increased throughout the 18th and 19th century.

At the end of the century, Puerto Rico was mostly an agricultural society with very little industry of any value. Puerto Rico was still seen by Spain as a military bastion. Improvements to the island defenses were accomplished in time to repel the last British attack in 1797 (7:54). Social life was still centralized around the family and the church. Education was minimally available and deteriorating. During the 19th century the cultivation of sugar and coffee was extremely profitable. This development had a tremendous impact in the land distribution of the island. Large plantations emerged displacing the small landholders (24:--).

Social developments during this century were centered around the city of San Juan (24:--). Due to the chaotic state of the treasury, very few improvements were seen. Public works did not exist as witnessed by the few and poorly maintained roads. Schools were only available in few places for selected people (7:81). Spanish officers held all the important positions and their standing in politics, as well as in society, was a privileged one. The abandoned state of the island was due in part to political developments in Europe, mainly, the Napoleonic wars of conquest which disrupted Spanish political life and the colonies' relationship with Spain (7:82).

The end of the century saw the development of political parties in Puerto Rico. At the same time, a very strong desire for autonomy and self-determination developed. The political leaders in the island began a political campaign with the objective to obtain autonomy and, eventually, independence. Finally, in 1897, the Spanish government under the leadership of Prime Minister Sagasta granted the request for autonomy. In agreement with the Autonomic Charter, a government structure for the island was defined. Puerto Rico's government was composed of a governor general, a bicameral parliament, and a cabinet consisting of a president and five ministers, all appointed by the governor general (24:--). In addition, the Autonomic Charter provided for "a provincial assembly, municipal governments and representation in the Spanish Parliament consisting of 16 deputies and 3 senators" (7:121).

The responsibility of the governor general was to make sure that the privileges of the colonial administration were observed.

The ministers were in charge of the administration of justice, state affairs, internal affairs, education, agriculture, industry, public works, commerce, and communications (24:--). The Senate and House of Representatives were responsible for all local legislation and fiscal matters. They also had the power to negotiate commercial treaties with foreign nations, although the Spanish government was responsible for the actual negotiations. Treaties negotiated by Spain that could affect the well-being of the island could be vetoed by the insular legislature (2:65). The legislature would set tariff duties and import-export taxes. The first elections were held on July 17, 1898 and the new government was ratified by the electorate. Seven days later, however, American troops landed in southern Puerto Rico and the experiment in self-government ended.

Following more than four centuries of Spanish colonial rule, Puerto Rico developed from a military bastion into an island with an identity. The process of colonization, started by the Spanish, increased migrations of French, Canary islanders, and Italians, colored by the contributions of the Africans and the Taino Indians, produced a unique type of "criollo," today's Puerto Rican. A Puerto Rican culture, national conscience, and a desire for autonomy developed. Culturally, the Puerto Ricans had developed a very refined taste for the fine arts. Musicians, poets, painters, and architects, thrived, nurtured by their intense love for the island (1:67-113). Socially, there were inadequacies and marked differences. A middle class was non-existent, and education, though available, was limited to the wealthy. This was the general situation found by the American troops when they entered Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898.

Chapter Three

PUERTO RICO USA

At the end of the Spanish-American War, Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States. This event brought on the Puerto Ricans significant changes in their political, economic, and cultural lifestyles. Following the occupation of the island by American troops, many changes were implemented. Initially, a period of military rule followed the military occupation. This was followed by a period of civilian governors known as the era of "Colonial Tutelage" (7:Ch 9). During this period many changes were implemented by the "tutors." A legislative body was established under the Foraker Act. American citizenship was granted to all Puerto Ricans under the Jones Act. The era of "Colonial Tutelage" ended in 1948 leaving behind the basis of a lasting relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico.

On the morning of July 25, 1898, the citizens of Guanica, Puerto Rico awoke to start another uneventful day in their lives. Little could they suspect that the Spanish flag would not be flying in the township's plaza that afternoon. That morning the USS Gloucester sailed into the bay of Guanica. With a force of 3,500 men the invasion of Puerto Rico had started (7:129). The Spanish troops were no match for the better trained and heavily armed American troops. Puerto Rico had been taken with minimal force and effort. In April of that year, Admiral Dewey's naval victory in the Philippines sealed Puerto Rico's future as a possession of the United States. By the time that American forces landed in Puerto Rico, the policy had been set by Theodore Roosevelt, then assistant Secretary of the Navy. Puerto Rico was to be part of the war indemnity (7:135). The policy was stated in a letter from Roosevelt to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, "Do not make peace until we get Porto Rico [Puerto Rico], while Cuba is made independent, and the Philippines, at any rate taken from Spain" (7:134). For a long time the United States had been interested in Puerto Rico, because of its strategic location in the Caribbean (3:10).

After the peace was signed and the terms agreed upon, a period of military governors followed. General John Brooke was first military governor of the island. Brigadier General Guy V. Henry replaced General Brooke. General Henry's methods of dealing with the Puerto Ricans were classified as tactless, rude, and stronghanded (7:145). In dealing with the local political leaders, he showed no tact and rather than promote understanding,

he antagonized them. Eventually, he was removed (7:146). General George Davis replaced General Henry, but he also had strong prejudices (7:148). To Davis, Puerto Ricans were not prepared to exercise home rule; however, he was quick in organizing and improving the economic situation of the island. Politically, Davis was instrumental in developing and defining the role of the United States as a vigilant tutor (7:148). Elihu Root, Secretary of War under President McKinley shared General Davis' views. To him, Puerto Ricans were incapable of exercising self-government and they had to be taught. He wrote: ". . . they would inevitably fail without a course of tuition under a strong and guiding hand" (7:149). The statements of the military governors and the politicians in Washington reflected the pervasive attitude towards the new possession. This attitude would prevail for the next fifty years, the period known as the "Colonial Tutelage."

Early in 1900, legislation was introduced in the House and Senate to provide civilian government for the Puerto Ricans. These efforts resulted in the Foraker Act of 1900. With this law the military governments ended. A civilian government was installed. This government was ruled and controlled by Washington. Specifically, it established an Executive Council which had legislative and executive powers subject to a governor's veto and congressional approval. The Executive Council had eleven members appointed by the President, the majority had to be Americans and a minority had to be Puerto Ricans. It also provided for a 35 member House of Representatives, a judiciary system, and a resident commissioner, all of them elected by the Puerto Ricans. The resident commissioner, however, had no voting rights in Congress. The Foraker Act did not grant American citizenship to the Puerto Ricans; instead, they were mentioned as citizens of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Ricans, in general, were disappointed with the congressional action. Many Puerto Rican political leaders such as Muñoz-Rivera, José de Diego, Matienzo-Cintrón, and others, did not approve the Foraker Act (7:159-163). In their view the law was contradictory to the American principles of equality. It was also the end to the autonomic dream. In short, it was an experiment in colonialism for the government in Washington (24:--).

The dream for autonomy remained. Still, the political leaders in Puerto Rico had nostalgic memories of the Spanish Autonomic Charter. A group of Puerto Rican politicians decided to form a political party with the objective of obtaining self-rule either as a state of the Union, an autonomous state, or as a republic (3:12). The party was known as, "Union de Puerto Rico", among the founders were Luis Muñoz-Rivera, José de Diego, and Rosendo Matienzo-Cintrón. The leaders were now united and rejected the concept of tutelage within the Foraker Act.

The Foraker Act deliberately omitted three principles of Constitutional law:

1. Consent of the governed
2. The right of the people to participate in the determination of all affairs related to their well-being, and
3. Election by the people of all their governing officers (24:--).

The Foraker Act, in summary, turned out to be shameful to the Puerto Ricans and unworthy of the United States. It was shameful because the treatment accorded to Puerto Rico and its people contrasted sharply with the way the United States government dealt with other lands, however acquired. First, it failed to designate the island as a territory, a status that by implication suggested statehood as a future option. Second, there was no indication, tentative or fragmentary, to grant independence (7:156). Even so, the Act remained in effect for 17 years.

In 1917 the Jones Act was approved and signed by President Woodrow Wilson. The main difference between the Foraker Act and the Jones Act was that it granted American citizenship to all the Puerto Ricans (5:9). Although it liberalized the provisions of the Foraker Act, the principles of colonial tutelage were retained. The Jones Act provided for an elected Senate and an elected House of Representatives. The President of the United States still appointed the governors, attorney general, commissioner of education, auditor, and Supreme Court judges. Its weakness was that it was not a constitution. It was an act of Congress and could be amended at will (5:10; 24:--). The provisions of the Jones Act would remain in effect for the next thirty-five years.

During the time the Foraker Act and the Jones Act were in effect, many American citizens were appointed to the governorship of Puerto Rico. In general, it can be said they all shared common traits, mainly, a lack of knowledge of Puerto Rico, its people, and culture. Many of the "tutors" were appointed by the President as a reward for political favors. However, in fairness to many of them, the author must point out their positive contributions. Reforms were implemented in the fields of education, health, public works, agriculture, and economics. It can be said that in the economic sector the governors exhibited proficiency in their administrative skills. Politically, the "tutors", were tactless at times and somewhat careless (24:--). However, not all of them had these traits. The last tutor, Rexford G. Tugwell, was the first to recognize the need for Puerto Rican self-government. He recommended that Puerto Ricans should be allowed to elect their own government and have some degree of internal autonomy.

At the end of Tugwell's term in 1946, a Puerto Rican named Jesús T. Piñeiro was appointed governor. The road was paved for a new political solution (5:16). A new approach would soon change Puerto Rico's political life.

Chapter Four

THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

The period of colonial tutelage ended with the election of Luis Muñoz-Marín to the governorship of Puerto Rico in 1948. Many events followed this significant milestone in Puerto Rico's political history that shaped Puerto Rico's present political life and atmosphere. A new political figure, Luis Muñoz-Marín, emerged dominating Puerto Rican politics for a period of almost 38 years. Puerto Rico's political life changed with the emergence of three political parties following the formulas of independence, statehood, and free association. Establishing the political compact between the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was another. All these events had long lasting influence in Puerto Rico's political development, and their effects can be observed even today.

In 1940, the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) assumed the power in the Puerto Rican legislature. This political party appealed to the masses on the grounds of agrarian, social, and economical reforms (5:14). The political roots of the new political entity were in the pro-independence movement. Under the able leadership of Luis Muñoz-Marín and under the slogan of "Pan, Tierra y Libertad" (Bread, Land, and Liberty), the PPD swept the island. The people trusted Muñoz-Marín, because he understood their problems. The leadership of the party was drawn from the middle or lower middle class, the farmers, small landowners, and university intelligentsia (3:16). "There was an important characteristic to this Popular Democratic Party: while the new political group was not anti-American and had many ideological affinities with the New Deal, it was not committed, to Americanization" (7:244).

Utilizing new ideas and tactics, the PPD managed to reach every potential voter in the city, the suburbs and, most important, the countryside. The PPD campaign was largely based on democratic ethics and the basics of a decent life, work, shelter, and food. In a brilliant political move, Muñoz-Marín avoided the ticklish question of the political status. In his grassroots contacts with the peasantry, he discovered most of the people were concerned about the effects of political independence, a feeling still prevalent today in the majority of the population of the island. In the 1944 elections the PPD was able to consolidate its power by winning a majority of seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives (7:255).

With the victory, the pro-independence faction of the PPD pressed Muñoz-Marín to request independence from the United

States (7:256). Although Muñoz-Marín believed in the independence ideal, he knew it was not acceptable to the Puerto Ricans. He was very aware that Puerto Rico's economy would not support political independence. When Muñoz-Marín stalled, the "Independientistas" formed their political party under the leadership of Gilberto Concepción de Gracia (7:267; 5:20). The Pro-Independence Party (PIP) was formed and their goal was to obtain independence through electoral means. Muñoz-Marín was subsequently accused of being a traitor to the cause of independence. To this day the "Independientistas" still hold this view of Muñoz-Marín and the PPD. This has caused friction between the political powerhouse of the PPD and the "Independientistas." Yet, the PIP has always opposed revolutionary action to obtain their goals (21:3). The leaders of this party postulate that independence is the only reasonable political solution to Puerto Rico's pressing problems, a view not shared by the majority of the Puerto Ricans (11:39). Puerto Ricans value their American citizenship and the political and economic stability that American rule has brought to the island. This feeling is pervasive throughout the island, "If independence means cutting all ties with the United States, then, independence is frightening and is passionately opposed" (19:68; 25:--).

The 1944 elections and the subsequent victory of the PPD, "established a political democratic hegemony that lasted for twenty-five years" (3:16). The victory was interpreted as a mandate to accomplish two goals: (1) to promote economic progress and industrialization; and (2) to decolonize the political relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. To accomplish these objectives the PPD had chosen a middle of the road approach to the political problem of Puerto Rico. As a result of the perceived mandate, Operation Bootstrap and industrialization by invitation were born (8:8). With a package of tax exemptions and access to low wage labor, investments in Puerto Rico were suddenly very attractive. As a result, many new industries were established, creating many jobs, and an economic bonanza that would last for nearly 25 years.

The second goal was accomplished in 1952 with the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Edward J. Bloomfield in his book, Puerto Rico: The Search for a National Policy summarizes the Commonwealth concept by saying:

The idea proposed by the PPD was novel: Congress was to recognize the principle of government by consent. Puerto Rico was to be self-governing in all internal matters, doing away with Presidential tutelage. It was not to be independent from the Union; Congress still could legislate in federal matters reserved under the law. But internal self-government was to be established (3:17).

Public Law 600 was approved by Congress and ratified in a referendum by the people of Puerto Rico (5:21). A constitutional

convention followed and the new constitution was ratified by another referendum and subsequently approved by Congress (3:18).

In the 1952 elections the PPD achieved a landslide victory reconfirming its political hegemony in time to witness the first international test of the new political status. The new status was tested at the United Nations in 1953 (3:18). After many debates Puerto Rico was removed from the list of non-self-governing territories (3:18). A triumph for the United States as well as for the Puerto Ricans. Subsequent challenges to the Puerto Rican political relationship with the United States have been presented at the United Nations, the latest being in 1978.

Finally, Puerto Rico was an internationally recognized political entity (3:18). At last, after 457 years in which most decisions were always made by the ruling nation, the Puerto Ricans could make their own decisions.

The decade of the 50's had seen the island develop a political identity, a growing industrialization program was taking off, and the present day political parties were formed. As the Commonwealth unfolded and developed, federal intervention in Puerto Rican affairs diminished. The period of tutelage was replaced by a period of collaboration, which reached its highest mark during the Kennedy administration (3:19). In 1961 President Kennedy visited the island. Hundreds of thousands filled the streets to welcome the President as he entered San Juan.

President Kennedy has been perceived as the only President who was sincerely interested in improving the Puerto Rican situation. The President and Governor Muñoz-Marin agreed that commonwealth status needed further development (3:20). In an exchange of letters with the President, Muñoz-Marin clarified his position and intentions. The Governor in one of his letters said, "The time has arrived to clarify the moral and juridical basis of the Commonwealth and the maximization of its powers and authority by devising ways for the people of Puerto Rico to participate in the federal functions that affected them." Both men agreed. Muñoz-Marin resigned his governorship to pursue this higher ideal which took shape in the form of a plebiscite. To Muñoz-Marin, the plebiscite would be the consummation of the Commonwealth that he fathered. In resigning the governorship Muñoz-Marin made a capital mistake which later would bring the downfall of the PPD (3:20).

Muñoz-Marin handpicked his successor, a brilliant administrator, Roberto Sanchez-Vilella (7:305). The plebiscite was held in 1967 and the commonwealth formula obtained 60.5% of the cast votes. The pro-statehood faction obtained 38.9% of the votes (7:306). The PIP elected not to participate. Encouraged by the support received in the plebiscite, the statehood supporters registered a new party, the New Progressive Party (PNP) (3:21). With a new leadership of wealthy industrialists and young professionals, the PNP was destined to be the standard-bearer of the pro-statehood movement. The PNP, and their candidate for governor, Luis A. Ferré, won the 1968 elections. The PPD lost their bid for the governorship after Sanchez Vilella led a

splinter party which divided the PPD in two factions.

In 1972, the PPD regained the governorship. This victory pointed out a very interesting trend in Puerto Rican politics. The Puerto Ricans were changing their voting habits. If the voters were displeased with the government's programs or actions, they would vote them out (5:29). This trend was not present when Muñoz-Marín was in power. These events not only proved that Muñoz-Marín was a man with political charisma, but also deeply trusted by the people. During the governorship of Rafael Hernández-Colón, attempts were made to implement the 1967 plebiscite (7:309). Ex-Governor Muñoz-Marín and Senator Marlow Cook headed a study group for the status of Puerto Rico. After many years of study, the group concluded that a new compact of permanent union should be adopted to replace the Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act included in Public Law 600. However, these recommendations were ignored by both the Nixon and the Ford administrations (7:311).

The Puerto Rican political roller coaster continued in 1976 and the statehood supporters obtained the governorship and partial control of the legislature. Carlos Romero-Barceló, a staunch statehood supporter, was elected Governor of Puerto Rico. His brand of politics was characterized by an aggressive style and an effort to involve Puerto Rican politics in the national mainstream. Re-elected in 1980, Governor Romero-Barceló's administration was characterized by poor economic policies and nearsightedness (7:309). The economy plunged, factories started closing down, unemployment raised to an official 25%, tourism declined, the oil prices quadrupled, and the construction industry came to a halt (5:41-45).

The poor state of the economy and accusations of corruption and scandals weakened Governor Romero's position. As a result the PPD and Rafael Hernández-Colón regained the governorship in 1984. The PPD obtained 49.3% of the votes while the PNP came in a close second with 45.6% of the votes (22:1). This was a serious blow to the statehood supporters who were looking to a third term for Governor Romero as a booster for statehood (7:312-313).

On the other hand, the pro-independence movement showed a strong resurgence during the past elections. After many years of internal divisions and quarrels, they were able to unify their efforts obtaining significant popular support. The popular support for the pro-independence movement is expected to grow and strengthen with time (11:39).

In concluding this chapter, the author wants to point out some trends and facts in the Puerto Rican political life. A new trend has emerged. Since the Puerto Ricans do not seem to be able to create a consensus for themselves, then the United States should create one for them. The danger of such a trend is that it can be interpreted as a unilateral imposition by a colonial empire. The international community would not hesitate in accusing the United States of such practices. The American influence in Puerto Rico since 1898 has been positive and desired

by the majority of the Puerto Ricans. The birth of the political parties, the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the economic bonanza of the 1950's clearly shows the potential of the Puerto Ricans. The present times are difficult ones for the island and its 3.2 million inhabitants. The economy is in jeopardy. The need for a new political consensus is evident and crucial for Puerto Rico. Statehood can be the solution and perhaps the time has come.

Chapter Five

STATEHOOD THE PROCESS OF SELF DETERMINATION

Statehood, as a viable alternative to the political status problem of Puerto Rico, is not devoid of problems and controversies. In this chapter the author will analyze the economic, political, and cultural impact of statehood on the Puerto Ricans. Then, with the historical perspective as a background, the author will discuss the different aspects considered important to achieve statehood.

Economic Considerations

The most far reaching effect of Puerto Rican statehood will be the economic implications (4:Ch 7). Presently, the Puerto Rican economy is suffering from the severe effects of the United States economic problems. For many years, the Puerto Rican economy has been largely dependent on the state of the economy of the mainland. Whatever happens to the United States economy affects the Puerto Rican economy in what has been termed as a ripple effect. To make things worse, the Puerto Rican government is highly dependent on transfer payments from the United States as part of the assistance programs of the Federal Government (5:39).

The long term economic structure of Puerto Rico as a state of the Union will depend on its human resources and its technological development. Very little can be said about natural resources since they are very limited. On the other hand, oil explorations as well as partially confirmed reserves of copper and nickel are very promising (2:344). By far the most abundant and reliable resource Puerto Rico has to offer is its people. Before this discussion continues let's define what the author means by long term. Long term will be the period of 20 or more years following the date on which Puerto Rico becomes a state. The first 20 years will be considered, to a great extent, a period of transition.

Puerto Rico has several comparative advantages which in the long term can contribute to the development of a strong economy. As mentioned before, people are Puerto Rico's best resource. The work force of the island has become skilled and highly productive. They have developed the necessary skills to manage and operate production to market products and to provide professional services. Furthermore, the educational system in Puerto Rico continues to produce highly skilled and educated blue collar workers, white collar workers, and professionals (4:185).

Another advantage is the year-round warm climate. The climate can be utilized to the island's economic advantage, specifically in the agriculture and tourism industries. With proper government support significant strides in agricultural diversification can be made, thus eliminating the dependency on a "one product agriculture." Because of its year-round warm climate, Puerto Rican farmers could produce two crops per year of fruit and vegetables. During the winter months, this industry could prove to be highly profitable in the mainland markets, taking in consideration that Florida and California are not able to escape cold weather spells (4:186). In the past three winters, Florida's citrus and vegetable industry has been severely affected by freezing spells.

Tourism could experience a dramatic growth. Investors and tourists would feel more secure regarding the uncertainties of Puerto Rico's political status once the island obtains statehood (4:187). Also, the new political status will help to change the perception of many mainland Americans that Puerto Rico is remote and a foreign country (4:186). Competition with other states where tourism is a prime industry would be tough. Puerto Rico would be able to obtain a good share of the tourism industry with aggressive incentives, federal support, and adequate local policies (4:188).

A third advantage is Puerto Rico's geographical location in the Caribbean. The island is located astride the major sea lanes between South America and the United States. As a Spanish speaking island with a Spanish culture and heritage, Puerto Rico is considered part of Latin America. Politically, this could prove to be extremely advantageous for the United States. As a state of the Union accepted as part of Latin America by these countries, statehood status can only improve the United States' political relations and standing with the Latin American countries, except for Cuba and Nicaragua (27:--; 28:--; 29:--; 30:--).

Statehood is not a panacea that will automatically solve every economic problem for the islanders. The manufacturing sector will provide a major source of employment within the Puerto Rican economy. On the other hand, Puerto Ricans will be extremely dependent upon ocean freight for importing raw materials and exporting finished products to the United States markets (23:--). In the manufacturing sector, Puerto Rico's advantage will lie with industries requiring moderate-to-intensive use of labor and whose products are not transportation or energy intensive (4:188-189). In the educational sector Puerto Rico will be able to export high level expertise to the Caribbean and Central America. Puerto Rico's highly developed educational system could be utilized to train Spanish-speaking students from Latin America in their vernacular language.

This is not a new role for Puerto Rico. Since 1952, over 34,000 men and women from 184 countries and territories around the world have received advanced

training at Puerto Rico's institutions of higher learning, both private and public (16:28A).

In this sense, Puerto Rico will be a political asset for the United States. Other services that could be exported are engineering, architecture, laboratory technicians, public relations, and financial services.

So far, the discussion has focused on the factors that will affect and shape the post-statehood economy. Under the present political status, Puerto Rico experienced a tremendous economic growth, especially during the 1950's and 1960's. At present, the island's economy is stagnant. Statehood offers the potential to promote accelerated economic growth relative to the present political status.

Political Considerations

Puerto Rican statehood would have far reaching effects in the political life of the Puerto Ricans as well as in the political life of the United States. First, Puerto Rico would be entitled to proportional representation in the United States Congress, giving the island seven representatives, two senators, and nine electoral votes. "Puerto Rico would have more representatives in Congress than half of the present states in the Union" (9:69). Proportional representation will give the Puerto Ricans political equality at present they do not enjoy. Second, Puerto Rican statehood will improve America's political image in the international scene and with the Latin American countries. During many years there has been a pervasive feeling among the Latin American countries that the "gringos," feel and act as if they were superior politically, economically, and militarily. Puerto Rico's present political status reinforces those feelings among these countries. The perception prevails that the United States maintains Puerto Rico in a permanent colonial status. In accepting the island as a state of the Union, the United States would make a very clear statement. The message would be that North Americans do not look with disdain upon Hispanic people and that the United States "is capable of ratifying the creation of a state of the Union comprised of Hispanics" (18:72). The third effect of statehood will be its impact on Puerto Rico's political system. Puerto Rico's political structures, executive, legislative, and judicial are carbon copies of the United States federal structures. The transition would be smooth and to a great extent simple, with little disruption.

In political terms, statehood would be received in a positive way by the Puerto Ricans. The political stature of the United States in the political international scene would be greatly enhanced. Above all, statehood would mean total participation in the nation's political process for 3.2 million Puerto Ricans.

Cultural Impact of Statehood

If there is an area where Puerto Ricans are sensitive, it has to be their cultural heritage. To many islanders, statehood threatens the very existence of their cultural roots. The thought that statehood could mean losing their culture and vernacular language, sends shivers of fear through the heart and soul of every Puerto Rican (14:41). After all, many Puerto Ricans still remember Governor Emmett Montgomery Reilly, one of the most disliked American tutors. In 1921 Governor Reilly declared the use of Spanish anti-patriotic and it was forbidden in schools and government agencies (9:446; 31:--). The majority of the Puerto Ricans are proud of their American citizenship and they are not willing to give it up. On the other hand, their culture, customs, and language irrefutably reflect 405 years of Spanish influence, a legacy that Puerto Ricans are not willing to give up at any cost (14:41; 1:32).

This fear, real or perceived, is the biggest stumbling block that the pro-statehood forces will face. In an effort to eliminate these fears, ex-Governor Carlos Romero-Barceló created the concept of "Estadidad Jibara" (statehood Puerto Rican style). The basis of this concept lies within three premises: (1) political equality will be obtained with statehood; (2) a 20 year transition period will be necessary for the economic adjustments inherent to statehood; and (3) statehood is wanted, but neither our language or culture are negotiable (9:84).

Statehood is the political solution that would accelerate Puerto Rico's economic recovery. Politically, statehood would eliminate the feelings of political inferiority of 3.2 million disenfranchised American citizens (8:85). There is no doubt that there are obstacles to be overcome by Puerto Rico and by the United States. Yet they are not insurmountable if there is a will. Ex-Governor Romero-Barceló said it in very simple words, "The goal of the Puerto Rican people is political equality within a framework which will permit our island and our nation to prosper together" (18:81).

Chapter Six

STATEHOOD IN PERSPECTIVE

The previous chapter discussed the viability of Puerto Rican statehood. This chapter will focus on the potential effects of Puerto Rican statehood on the United States national interests in the Caribbean Basin region. This part of the study will address the following: (1) how Puerto Rican statehood will be accepted and perceived by the Caribbean Basin countries; and (2) how the new political status of the island could serve as a deterrent to the Cuban-Soviet expansionism in the region.

The first question to ask is, "What will be the reaction of the Caribbean Basin countries should Puerto Rico become a state of the Union?" This question can be answered in simple terms.

Since 1898, after Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States following the Spanish-American War, American presence has significantly influenced the political and economical development of the island. This is a fact the Caribbean Basin countries are aware of as witnessed by the educational, economic, and political progress of the island. Nevertheless, in some countries of the region there is a pervasive feeling that Puerto Ricans are "colonial lackeys of the U.S.A." (18:72). Statehood for Puerto Rico would eliminate this feeling and contribute significantly to enhancing America's image in the region. Such a political event would signal to these countries that America does not look down on Hispanics and is interested in having good relations with its Spanish speaking neighbors. Puerto Rico could be instrumental in fomenting, maintaining, and improving those relations.

For many years, the Puerto Rican government has given educational, technological, and economic assistance to other countries in the Caribbean Basin region. For example, in 1979 the government of Puerto Rico provided relief to the Dominican Republic after a hurricane struck that island (18:74). In June of 1985, Governor Rafael Hernández-Colón, while attending the Commonwealth Caribbean Heads of Government summit, announced the creation of a Caribbean scholarship program at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez (16:28A). These initiatives have strengthened the relationships between Puerto Rico and the Caribbean Basin countries. On the other hand, Puerto Ricans do not feel ambiguous being Puerto Ricans and Americans, and many countries of the region are beginning to regard this as desirable. This feeling can be witnessed by the words of the Dominican Republic Foreign Minister, Emilio Ludovino Fernández to a Puerto Rican journalist, "whatever status decision the Puerto Ricans

should make, be it political integration with the United States or any other solution, it will meet with our total, absolute, and complete acceptance" (18:75). Similarly, in a recent interview with this author, Dr. Hugo Gutierrez-Vega, Minister in Charge of Cultural Affairs at the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C., stated, "Whatever the Puerto Rican people decide about their present political status, as long as it is done through a democratic electoral process and without coercion, my country will support the Puerto Ricans' decision" (26:--). Lt Col Erwin Pereda of the Guatemalan Air Force General Staff, in another interview with the author, agrees with Dr. Gutierrez-Vega, "... if it is a decision achieved by electoral means, and a consensus of the majority, I cannot see how or why any Latin American country could oppose to Puerto Rican statehood" (30:--). In short, one can infer the Caribbean Basin countries will not oppose Puerto Rican statehood.

The second question to be addressed is, "How could statehood for Puerto Rico deter Cuban-Soviet expansionism in the Caribbean Basin?"

"The Caribbean is a region to which the Cuban leadership has given priority" (9:78). For many years, the Cubans have been providing "technical" assistance to some countries in the area, like Grenada and Nicaragua. Edward Gonzalez, in his article "The Cuban and Soviet Challenge in the Caribbean Basin," indicates that, based on the past performances and behavior of the Cubans, Castro's strategy entails four objectives:

1. To promote Third World struggle against "imperialism" in order to erode the global power and presence of the United States.
2. To extend Cuba's influence and presence in Africa, the Caribbean, and Central America
3. To promote the rise of radical left or Marxist-Leninist regimes in the Caribbean Basin . . . aligned with Cuba.
4. To increase Cuba's potential as a second-order power . . . through infusion of Soviet military and economic assistance (12:75).

Cuban interventionism in the Caribbean Basin is not new (12:79). However, the Soviet endorsement of the Cuban theory of armed struggle and the support to new socialist-oriented regimes such as Nicaragua are changes in previous Soviet conservative policy (12:80). To complicate the delicate balance of the region, there is Cuba's growing military might. Second to the United States, Cuba has the largest, best trained, and best equipped armed forces of the Caribbean Basin region and Latin America. This fact alone gives the Cubans the capacity to intimidate its neighbors and at the same time support leftist movements, as in the case of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the insurgency movements in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador (6:Ch 3; 27:--; 28:--; 29:--). As a result, Cuba continues to be

both an intrusive player in the Caribbean Basin and a political headache for the United States (12:81).

The question to ask is, "Can Puerto Rico as a state of the Union serve as a deterrent to the growing Cuban-Soviet influence in the region?"

Yes, Puerto Rico can be the power broker and deter the Cuban-Soviet influence in the region. Three arguments can be used to support the affirmative statement. The first argument is the historical record of peaceful political achievements by the Puerto Ricans. Through 405 years of Spanish rule, the island was never involved in a civil war. Peace was the rule rather than the exception. After 87 years of American rule, remarkable economic, educational, and political progress has been achieved. Can any other country in Latin America claim the same? Definitely, not! As a showcase of the achievements of democracy, the Puerto Rican example is a lot easier to follow. The Puerto Rican model puts food in peoples' mouths, not Marxist or Leninist rhetoric. It shows the people how to learn new skills, how to work with their resources, and how to achieve progress by peaceful means. To destroy and violate human rights for the sake of a "revolution" is not the way to progress. Because the island was part of the Spanish empire, it is considered as part of the Latin American community of nations. As a state of the Union, Puerto Rico could provide the necessary leadership to counter the Cuban-Soviet influence in the region. This can be achieved by a series of technical, economic, and educational programs, approved by Congress and aimed at helping the Caribbean Basin region. Puerto Rico could become the best pro-Hispanic congressional lobby this region ever had.

Second, as a result of the heavy industrialization program of the 1950's and 1960's, the island has a surplus of highly skilled blue collar workers. Since one of Puerto Rico's best resources is people, this work force can become our ambassador of goodwill in Latin America and the Caribbean Basin region. This work force can be exported to lesser developed countries, to help establish new industries and teach skills, under a federal program for technical assistance and development. Because of such common factors as language, culture, and history, the success probability will be high. At present, Puerto Rico is in the process of completing industrial agreements with the islands of Grenada and St. Marteen. The purpose of these agreements is to establish manufacturing facilities for basic electronic components under a new concept of cooperative help known as "twin factories." In a recent interview with this author, Senator Francisco Aponte-Perez, Chairman of the Senate's Legal Committee, stated:

This concept of "twin factories" will help Puerto Rico as well as the islands of the Caribbean Basin. The purpose is to improve the economic situation in Puerto Rico and the economic situation of our neighbors of the Basin. The concept entails the

manufacturing of basic components at the basic manufacturing facilities, like the ones being built in Grenada and St. Marteen. The second step involves assembly of the finished component at the main factory in Puerto Rico. This is done this way because of our trained personnel and facilities. Marketing and distribution of the products is handled by our personnel in Puerto Rico. In the case of Grenada, I must point out, the agreement will create enough jobs to eliminate their unemployment problem. Furthermore, the experiment will not stop with Grenada and St. Marteen, our goal is to involve the other islands and countries of the Caribbean Basin region. The goal of this government, is to make Puerto Rico the economic and technical center of the region. We want to help in creating jobs, teach skills, and educate the people. In doing this, Puerto Rico can help in eliminating unemployment and social unrest, vital ingredients for violence, insurgency, and revolution (23:--).

Third, the educational infrastructure of the island can be used to train and educate students from the islands and countries of the Caribbean Basin region. Puerto Rico has numerous universities and technical schools, all of them considered outstanding (3:37). This educational system can provide training in many technical and professional areas. This tactic will stimulate the development of sound and strong economic infrastructures in the Caribbean Basin (3:38). Consequently, social unrest could be eliminated, undermining the Cuban-Soviet designs of hegemony in this region.

In summary, it can be stated that Puerto Rican statehood will be accepted by the Caribbean Basin countries. However, this acceptance will be conditional on a process of free decision and election by the Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rican statehood can serve as a deterrent to Cuban-Soviet hegemony in the Caribbean Basin region by contributing to the development of the region. Puerto Rico, as state of the Union, can become the training school for future Latin American diplomats, leaders, and ambassadors.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSIONS

As stated in Chapter One of this project, the purpose of this study was to improve the reader's understanding of the Puerto Rican political and economic problems. To accomplish this purpose, the author has exposed the reader to the historical perspective of the island. Included were Puerto Rico's Spanish colonial origins, through its contemporary situation as a territory of the United States. This historical background was followed by an analysis on the viability of statehood and the potential effects on the Caribbean Basin political balance. In this final chapter the author will focus on analyzing and discussing major obstacles to statehood, alternatives, conclusions, and recommendations. The study will conclude with the author's appraisal and opinion.

Statehood, as a solution to Puerto Rico's political riddle, is not devoid of major obstacles. These include: (1) the lack of a specific U.S. policy towards Puerto Rico; (2) the perceived fear of language and cultural dismemberment; (3) the poor state of the economy; and (4) the political sensitivities both in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico.

First, the lack of a US policy to deal with Puerto Rico's present problems complicates the statehood issue. Although, several Presidents of the United States are on record as supporting statehood for Puerto Rico, their words have never been followed with actions (20:12). This is not difficult to explain, since "the Executive branch of the United States is not well equipped to deal with the Puerto Rican question. There is no single office with responsibility for coordinating US relations with Puerto Rico" (5:57). The support for statehood at the Executive branch level has been contradictory. In various instances, Presidents have publicly supported statehood for Puerto Rico and then later retracted their words or followed them with inaction. In December of 1976, then President Ford said, "I will submit legislation to Congress requesting the admission of Puerto Rico to the Union as a state," but nothing happened. In 1980, when Ronald Reagan, announced his candidacy for the Presidency declared, "It is my intention to initiate legislation, shortly after I become President, requesting statehood for Puerto Rico." Soon after his election, President Reagan's intentions changed (15:276).

In sum, the need for a specific and stable policy to deal with Puerto Rico's urgent needs is necessary, as well as a single office assigned to coordinate US relations with Puerto

Rico (5:67). The statehood supporters on the island must prepare a strategy to support their position in coordination with this office. Only in this way will statehood for the island be considered seriously, no matter who is occupying the Executive chair.

The second obstacle to statehood is the pervasive fear of cultural and language dismemberment that the Puerto Ricans feel statehood would bring. This fear is mostly a perception problem rather than a real one. However, Puerto Ricans have a tendency of associating linguistic and cultural issues with political issues (14:41). To eliminate this fear, statehood supporters need to establish a serious and intensive educational program to gather public support for the statehood issue. The Puerto Ricans must be instructed that there is no precedent establishing English as the official language of the United States. Furthermore, they need to be assured that Congress will not demand that American citizens, in this case the Puerto Ricans, must speak English to enjoy the rights and prerogatives of their American citizenship (9:81). Again, only through an intensive educational program can this obstacle be removed.

The third significant obstacle to statehood is the present poor state of the economy. "A Delphi study conducted by the Puerto Rican Economists Association in late 1984 indicated that the present economic model, born out of the 1950's Operation Bootstrap, is now stagnant, and the island will not experience economic improvement in the next decade" (15:279). Until the Puerto Rican economy recovers and becomes self-sufficient, statehood will be a hard package to sell to Congress and the American public. Economists in Puerto Rico are suggesting that the \$2.08 billion dollars of discretionary payments geared to support programs such as housing, social programs, and food stamps, should be given to the Puerto Rican government in the form of block grants. "This block grants program could be used to help develop Puerto Rico's industrial structure, rather than depend on externally owned assembly plants" (5:63). Further development of the "twin factory" concept would help in complementing the block grant program. Creating industries geared to local consumption and export will accomplish two objectives: (1) to bring the island out of economic stagnation; and (2) to allow Puerto Rico to become the economic leader of the region. This scheme will make the transition to statehood considerably easier. Economic self sufficiency should be the long term goal and job creation the immediate objective (5:63).

The fourth stumbling block is the political obstacles to statehood. Jorge Heine in his book The Puerto Rican Question, clearly explains the nature of this stumbling block:

There have been at least three major attempts to revise and upgrade the present Commonwealth status (in 1953, 1959, and 1975), and all of them came to naught because of opposition within various branches of the United States government. One may agree or

disagree with the wisdom of the political strategy followed by the government of Puerto Rico to obtain passage of the "culminated" Commonwealth bills, but the fact is that, in projects fully supported by Puerto Rican voters, let alone legislature, the United States has not stood by the principle of self-determination (5:59).

One of the reasons for the political stalemate regarding Puerto Rico is because the decision rests with Congress. Puerto Ricans do not know what the consequences will be should they decide on one political status or another. Whatever the selection, they know that Congress will decide the issue and no guarantee exists that Congress will accept the results. These matters are extremely important in determining support of one option over the other (5:60).

The Puerto Rican question is bigger than the status issue. Political analysts in the island and the United States agree that the time has arrived for the decolonization of Puerto Rico. The specifics for this plan have yet to be determined. Before statehood can be accomplished, the United States needs to develop a policy towards Puerto Rico. However, this policy needs to take into account the specific needs and differences of Puerto Rico and the United States. Such a policy should be based on the following principles:

1. Make Puerto Rico economically self-sufficient.
2. Ensure that the process to reach political consensus be fair and equitable.
3. Include the federal government and all Puerto Rican political parties in any attempt to break the political stalemate.
4. Hold a plebiscite to decide the political status.

Statehood for Puerto Rico is a credible and viable option. But, this specific political status will not occur in the immediate future and a phase-in period will be necessary for the following reasons:

1. The lack of a strong economy and natural resources.
2. The cultural and language barriers (as perceived by the Puerto Ricans and the American public).
3. The lack of a firm commitment, by the United States Executive branch and by Congress, to decolonize Puerto Rico.

Once these obstacles are resolved, statehood can be achieved. The specific time period, at this moment, cannot be predicted. Recent developments in the Puerto Rican political life can potentially offer the Puerto Ricans an attractive political alternative other than statehood. After returning to power in the 1984 elections, the PPD and commonwealth supporters

have been very active in promoting a new approach to the island's political and economic problems. This alternative, if accepted by Congress, will grant liberalized autonomic powers to Puerto Rico further complicating the statehood issue. In an interview with the author, PPD Senator Francisco Aponte-Perez, indicated:

The 1985 GAO report regarding the new Free Association pact of the Marshall Islands and the Micronesia with the United States can influence the relationships with its other overseas territories as in the case of Guam, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. This pact is now before Congress for consideration. If approved, its modifications could mark a new development in constitutional and international law for the United States. If the pact is adopted it would have a substantial impact in the political and economic development of the island. Free Association means more autonomy, Puerto Ricans could enjoy the following:

1. The capacity to impose our own taxes to protect our industries.
2. The power to negotiate our own economic treaties, especially those that benefit Puerto Rico.
3. The power to establish our own system of customs tariffs responsive to our needs.
4. The guarantee that citizens of the associated states will maintain their rights.
5. The United States will still be responsible for defense and security.
6. The US dollar as common currency.

Of course there are many other advantages to this Free Association. On the other hand, the GAO report also confirms that the present economic problems of the island are severe and that the economic infrastructure cannot support the island. In fact, the statehood issue is now dead. The extra-official policy regarding statehood for Puerto Rico is that "statehood for Puerto Rico is not an alternative" (23:--).

On February 3 1986, Governor Hernandez-Colon delivered his state of the Commonwealth message in which he highlighted aggressive plans for the incoming fiscal year. These plans include: (1) public works projects totaling \$1.07 billion that are expected to generate 30,000 new jobs; (2) a new industrial incentives law giving high tax breaks to plants established in high unemployment areas; and (3) monthly wages hike to all government employees (17:12).

These new developments can be interpreted as a setback for the pro-statehood supporters. How much of a setback? Only time can tell. If the supporters of the commonwealth status

(autonomists) can in fact pull the island out of the economic "doldrums," they will be able to make a very strong argument about the inadequacy of statehood. On the other hand, the statehood supporters could use the same argument to their advantage. If Puerto Rico becomes economically self-sufficient, then there should be no objection to its admission in the Union.

In conclusion, it can be stated that statehood is a viable alternative to solve Puerto Rico's political impasse. Furthermore, there is a deep desire in Puerto Rico to change the "status quo." Regardless of the political option chosen it will entail major structural changes in the relations with the United States. It is clear that Puerto Ricans reject the idea of political independence and, given the choice, statehood will be selected by the majority (31:--). However, there are conditions that must be met before statehood can occur. The economy has to be restructured, Puerto Ricans will have to be educated on the new political status, and political support for Puerto Rican statehood by Congress and the President will be absolutely necessary. Regardless of the solution, the fact remains that decolonization of Puerto Rico is absolutely necessary. Without a decolonization process that addresses both the economic and cultural aspects of colonialism, the Puerto Rican people will be unable to exercise their right to self-determination (3:56). The Puerto Ricans can be patient if they perceive action, rather than complacency, as the rule and not the exception. Statehood for Puerto Rico will provide the vehicle for decolonization and an orderly integration into the American political mainstream.

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